

REMARKS

The Examiner indicates in paragraph 1 of the Office Action that the disclosure is objected to because of the informalities, some of which the Examiner specifically identifies. In response to the Examiner's indication, the specification has been amended as set forth above, without adding any additional subject matter. The amendments to the specification are made to correct simple clerical errors in the specification and, therefore, are within the scope of the application disclosure as originally filed. Accordingly, it is submitted that these corrections to the specification should be entered.

The Examiner indicates in paragraph 2 of the specification that claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

The Examiner states his objection as follows.

Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claim 2 states "second notifying state determining means for determining and selecting in advance said current notifying states on the basis of said subsequent notifying states determined by said subsequent notifying state determining means". This is confusing and does not make sense. The claim is saying that the current notifying state is determined based on subsequent notifying states. This is not possible. One cannot determine something in the present based on something in the future. The claim is also in contradiction to claim 1 where the subsequent notifying states are determined based on the current notifying state.

The Examiner's objection is respectfully traversed for the following reasons:

Claim 2 is supported by the description in the specification at page 41, lines 22 to 34 as follows.

In addition to the notifying means for generating game sounds 1 to 5, the game machine of the embodiment comprises the second notifying means collectively constituted by the rotation reel back lamps (1) to (9), the game condition indication LED 25, the sound generation means for generating the game start sound 1 or 2. The notifying state in the current game (i.e., current notifying state) by the second notifying means is determined by the second notifying state determining means on the basis of the notifying state to be notified in the subsequent game (i.e., subsequent notifying state) in the step 110. As a consequence, the notification in the current game is notified additionally by the second notifying means in the notifying state associated with the game sound 1 to 5 which has already been determined to be output in the subsequent game sound. The game machine of the embodiment thus provides various kinds of notifying contents, thereby enabling to afford the game players extensive amusement.

As shown in FIG. 42, the subsequent game sound is determined in step 109, the combination of the game start sound and the operation pattern of the rotation reel back lamps (1) to (9) is determined by the second notifying state determining means in step 110, and the game start sound thus determined in step S110 is outputted from the speaker in step S111, and the rotation reel back lamps (1) to (9) are operated in step S134, S139, and S146 in accordance with the reel lamp operation pattern determined in step S110. The subsequent game sound thus determined in step S109 in the current game will be outputted in step S106 in the subsequent game.

According to the present invention, the subsequent game sound constitutes the notifying state to be notified in the subsequent game, i.e., the subsequent notifying state. The rotation reel back lamps (1) to (9), the game condition indication LED 25, and/or the sound generation means for generating the game start sound 1 or 2 constitute the second notifying means according to the present invention. This means that the combination of the game start sound and the operation pattern of the rotation reel back lamps (1) to (9) constitutes the current notifying state.

This leads to the fact that the subsequent notifying state determining means is operative to determine and select in advance the subsequent notifying states in the current game on the basis of the current notifying state to be informed by the notifying means in step S109.

Since the “subsequent notifying states” are selected in advance in the current game, in step 109, the “subsequent notifying states” can serve as a basis for selecting the current notifying states in step 110, and, in fact, the “subsequent notifying states” do serve as basis for selecting the “current notifying states” as recited in claim 2.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 2 defining the second notifying state determining means for determining and selecting in advance said current notifying states on the basis of said subsequent notifying states determined by said subsequent notifying state determining means is not confusing and is not impossible, but does make sense as well as particularly points out and distinctly claims the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In paragraph 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1 to 8 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kaufman, U.S. Patent No. 4,624,459 in view of Ishibashi, U.S. Patent No. 5,695,188. The Examiner explains the Kaufman patent as follows.

Kaufman discloses a slot machine. The machine comprises shift and display means for shifting and displaying a plurality of rows. Each row having a plurality of symbols (Fig. 1). The game has a notifying means for notifying a game player of information including a current notifying state such as the display of symbols forming the gaming result. The game also includes a subsequent notifying state determining means for determining and selecting in advance the subsequent notifying states in the current game based on the current notifying state that is informed of the player by the notifying means (col. 1 lines 51-57). For example, the player is notified of the current game state through the display of the combination of symbols after the reels have stopped. Based on whether or not this is a winning combination, the player is then informed of a multiple payout by the multiple payout indicator, i.e. subsequent notifying state. Consequently, the notifying information is correspondent to specified prize-winning state determined by the prize-winning state determining means at a predetermined probability. The prize-winning state could be a big or medium winning state (col. 3 lines 33-42). Kaufman discloses a token acceptor (col. 2 lines 51-52). It would have been obvious to have the notifying means operative to notify the game player of the notifying state determined by the subsequent notifying state determining means when a current or subsequent game starts with a game medium inserted into the token accepting slot. Most games are started with the deposit of coins into a slot; consequently, it is obvious to start notifying players of their winnings once the game has been started. It would also have been obvious to have the current notifying state be identical to the subsequent notifying state and to continue to notify the game player of the identical notifying state without interruption. For example, if a player wins 1 game and then has to win 1 more to get the multiple payout. The multiple payout indicator could be displayed during both

games so that players are always informed that one more win will deliver a larger prize.

The Examiner thus relies on the combination symbols displayed after the reels have stopped as being a notification of the current game state, but the combination of symbols merely indicates the result of a game when the game ends and are not an indication of a notifying state corresponding to the notifying states in the present invention. In the present invention, the notifying states are “regular game” “regular game in RB inner winning operation,” and “regular game in BB inner winning operation,” and the game player is notified of information in these states while the game is being played.

The game machine defined in claim 1 comprises: notifying means for notifying a game player of notifying information in notifying states including a current notifying state and subsequent notifying states following said current notifying state, while the game player is enjoying games including a current game and subsequent games following said current game; and subsequent notifying state determining means for determining and selecting in advance said subsequent notifying states in said current game on the basis of said current notifying state to be informed by said notifying means. The game machine defined in claim 1, thus constructed, has following function and advantages.

The notification notified in the current game will be associated with the notification to be notified in the subsequent game, thereby leading to the fact that the influence of the notification notified in the current game is not ended when the current game ends. The game machine defined in claim 1 thus constructed can enhance the fun of the games.

The controller (40) of the gaming device taught by Kaufman does not enable the multiple payout indicator (49) to provide the indication until a difference between the win counter (46)

and the multiple payout random number (R) reaches a predetermined value, i.e., one. The gaming device taught by Kaufman may continue to provide the multiple payout indication in subsequent games when the game player loses a game. On the other hand, the gaming device taught by Kaufman will not continuously notify the game player of the multiple payout indication once the multiple payout is made and the win counter (46) is cleared. This means that the gaming device taught by Kaufman does not have a notifying means for notifying a game player of notifying information in notifying states including a current notifying state and subsequent notifying states following the current notifying state because of the fact that the gaming device does not notify a game player of the multiple payout indication until the difference between the win counter (46) and the multiple payout random number (R) reaches the predetermined value. Moreover, the gaming device taught by Kaufman does not have subsequent notifying state determining means for determining and selecting in advance said subsequent notifying states in said current game on the basis of said current notifying state to be informed by said notifying means.

Accordingly, Kaufman fails to teach or suggest the notifying means for notifying a game player of notifying information in notifying states including a current notifying state and subsequent notifying states following said current notifying state, while the game player is enjoying games including a current game and subsequent games following said current game; and subsequent notifying state determining means for determining and selecting in advance said subsequent notifying states in said current game on the basis of said current notifying state to be informed by said notifying means. Thus, the construction of the game machine defined in claim 1 is entirely different from that of the gaming device taught by Kaufman.

Because the construction of the game machine defined in claim 1 is entirely different from that of the gaming device taught by Kaufman, the above function and advantages attained by the game machine defined in claim 1 cannot be expected from the gaming device disclosed in the reference to Kaufman.

The Examiner explains his reliance on Ishibashi as follows.

Ishibashi teaches of a gaming machine that determines a winning prize state based on a random number lottery. Stop control means control the stop of the reels based on the predetermined prize winning state (See Ishibashi col. 5 lines 35-48, 60-65; col. 8 lines 20-42). It would have be obvious at the time the invention was made to select the winning prize state by a random number lottery. It is well known throughout the art to use random numbers for selection of game outcomes. By randomly selecting a number, the game can be fair to all players. Ishibashi also teaches of a second notifying means in the form of sound. Sounds are used to notify a game player of notifying information in a current notifying state. The sounds are determined and selected in advance for broadcast to a player (See Ishibashi col. 8 lines 4-13). It would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to have a second notifying means so that players would clearly know the results of the prize.

The sound generating means of the gaming device taught by Ishibashi is operative to generate different sounds, for example, “do”, “re”, “mi”, “fa”, “sol”, “la”, and “ti”, for each of the symbols positioned on the winning line when each of the plurality of symbol columns is stopped as shown in FIG. 6. The gaming device taught by Ishibashi simply notifies a game player of the symbols positioned on the winning line. It does not notify a game player of notifying information in notifying states including a current notifying state and subsequent

notifying states following said current notifying state. This means that the gaming device taught by Ishibashi does not have the notifying means for notifying a game player of notifying information in notifying states including a current notifying state and subsequent notifying states following said current notifying state, while the game player is enjoying games including a current game and subsequent games following said current game; and subsequent notifying state determining means for determining and selecting in advance said subsequent notifying states in said current game on the basis of said current notifying state to be informed by said notifying means.

The Examiner contends that it would be obvious to have in the Ishibashi system a second notifying means so that the players would clearly know the results of their prize. But a means providing such an indication would not be a subsequent notifying state determining means which determines and selects in advance subsequent notifying states on the basis of the current notifying state as recited in claim 1 or a second notifying means which selects the current notifying states on the basis of subsequent notifying states as recited in claim 2.

The Examiner contends that the feature recited in claim 4 requiring a continuous indication when the notifying states are the same is obvious, but the Examiner fails to give any reason as to why this feature is obvious. It is submitted that it is not obvious to have a continuous indication in the applicant's system in which the notifying states are selected and may be different or the same.

As indicated above, construction of the game machine defined in claim 1 is entirely different from that of the gaming device taught by both Kaufman and Ishibashi. Accordingly, the function and advantages attained by the game machine defined in claim 1 cannot be expected

from any combination of Kaufman and Ishibashi.

The dependent claims 2 to 8 depending on the above claim 1 are submitted to be patentably distinguishable over Kaufman in view of Ishibashi for the same reasons as claim 1.

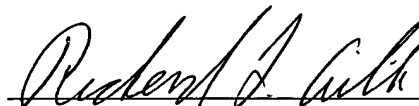
New claim 9 is dependent upon claim 1 and distinguishes from the prior art for the same reasons as claim 1.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention as defined in the claims is patentably distinguishable over the prior art of record and that the application is now in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

Date:

March 5, 2003



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Specification:

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 13, as follows:

There has so far been ~~well known in the art~~ provided a slot machine which is among those types of the game machine. The slot machines as described above are well known in the art. In general, such a known slot machine comprises a front panel, and three rotation reels juxtaposed in the rear side of the front panel and rotatably supported on the body of the slot machine. Each of the rotation reels has a peripheral surface having thereon various kinds of symbol marks arranged in a row at a predetermined interval. Within each of the rotation reels is provided an internal light which can light the symbol marks on the peripheral surface of the rotation reel from the rear side of the symbol marks to ensure that a game player can observe the symbol marks respectively through observation windows formed in the front panel. On the observation windows of the front panel is drawn five prize winning lines which make it possible for the game player to enjoy a game with thrilling and exciting feelings so that any predetermined set of the symbol marks will be stopped and displayed in line on any of the five prize winning lines or not.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 8, as follows:

The prize winning states include a big prize winning, ~~an~~ a medium prize winning, and a small prize winning. The big prize winning and the medium prize winning are won with three symbol marks of "7" or other predetermined symbol marks which are stopped from rotating in

line by the game player on the prize winning lines of the observation windows. The big prize winning allows the game player to play a big bonus game (BB game), while the medium prize winning allowing the game player to play a regular bonus game (RB game). These big and medium prize winnings mean that the game player can have respective rights to play a special bonus game by which the game player can obtain a large number of coins. On the contrary, the small prize winning can entitle the game player to get a few coins when the rotation reels are stopped by him or her with a predetermined number of symbol marks such as “plums” and “bells” being stopped from rotating in line on any of the prize winning lines of the observation windows.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 32, as follows:

The above mentioned lottery operation using random numbers can determine the big prize winning which in turn raises ~~an~~ a prize winning flag, and a notification flag with a predetermined probability. The notification flag thus raised serves to light an indication device such as a notification light provided in front of the front panel of the slot machine, thereby notifying the game player of winning the big prize winning through the lottery operation of the slot machine. The prize winning flag thus raised will remain in the subsequent game if the set of symbol marks corresponding to the big prize winning fail to be stopped and displayed on any of the prize winning lines in the current game. As a result, the notification light continues to turn on until the set of the symbol marks corresponding to the big prize winning are stopped and displayed on any of the prize winning lines.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 4, line 34 as follows:

When the current notifying state in the current game is identical to the subsequent notifying states in the subsequent games, the notifying means may preferably continue to notify the game player of the identical notifying state without interruption.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 13 as follows:

The objects, features and advantages of the present invention will ~~becom~~become apparent as the description proceeds when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 17 as follows:

Figs. 16(e) to ~~15(f)~~ 16(h) are tables respectively showing the relationships between the game start sounds and the rotation reel lamp operation groups 5 to 8 available upon selecting the second information notifying state in the processing unit forming part of the slot machine according to the present invention,

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 22 as follows:

At the lower portion of the front panel 2 are provided a sound penetrating holes 19 and a medal receptacle 20. The sound penetrating holes 19 are adapted to allow the sound emitted from a speaker housed within the slot machine 1 to be emitted out of the slot machine 1. The medal receptacle 20 serves to reserve game medals paid out from a medal paying-out opening 21 disposed at the upper side of the medal receptacle 20. On the front upper portion of the slot

machine 1 is provided a dividend rate indication portion 22 for indicating the number of game medals to be paid out for each of prize winnings.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 30 as follows:

†To the right side of the rotation reels 3 to 5 on the front panel 2 is provided a prize winning indication lamp 24 functions to inform the game player of the current game condition such as big prize winning game condition and middle prize winning game condition, which will be described later, when the prize winning indication lamp 24 is turn on. The prize winning indication lamp 24 is turned on at a predetermined provability by a lottery after the bonus game condition such as the big prize winning game condition and the middle prize winning game condition is determined.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 4 as follows:

The photo sensor 59 detects the light blocking plate 60 passing through the photo sensor 59 and thus generates a reset pulse as each of the rotation reel ~~reels~~ 4, 5 and 5 makes a full rotation. The thus generated reset pulse is transmitted to the CPU 31 through the rotation reel position sensing circuit 44. The RAM 33 contains discrete values specifying position ranges of the rotation reels 3, 4 and 5, respectively. The CPU 31 is operated to clear the respective value contained in the RAM 33 to zero upon receiving a reset pulse from any of the rotation reels 3, 4, and 5, thereby enabling any error caused between the value stored in the RAM 33 specifying a position range of each of symbol marks being rotated and the actual position of each of the stepping motors 55 to be eliminated for a full rotation.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 22, line 2 as follows:

In Fig. 14 there is shown a table showing the relationships between the game start sounds and the rotation reel lamp operation group numbers. The ~~roup-group~~ group numbers of 1 to 26 are assigned to the current game sound and six kinds of the prize winning flag. An entertainment pattern of the game start sound and rotation reel lamp operation is determined according to the variation value and the group number.